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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002800

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#) [UN](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#) [MARITIME](#) [SECURITY](#)

SUBJECT: UN COMMITTEE ON ARMS SMUGGLING TO SOMALIA; YEMEN'S
ROLE

REF: SANAA 2618

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Alan G. Misenheimer
for reasons 1.5 (b and d)

11. (c) Summary: The UN Committee of Experts presented highlights of its "Report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia pursuant to SCR 1474" (2003) to members of the Diplomatic Corps in Yemen on November 16. A number of Ambassadors or Deputy Chiefs of Mission from western countries, including the UK, Germany and France, as well as African states, including Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia attended; Pol/Econ Chief represented the Embassy. The discussion focused mainly on Yemen's role as a supplier and transporter of arms. The Committee also reported on an earlier meetings with ROYG officials, including FM Qirbi, representatives of the ministries of interior, Defense and Transportation, and "military intelligence," noting that the response from the ROYG was positive, but that more needs to be done. In addition to general agreement that information sharing is important, several key points were made in both sets of meetings: the amount of arms in Yemen must be reduced; the ROYG is aware of the illegal export of arms via sea routes and plans to increase licensing of arms and registering/monitoring of vessels; and Yemen has requested assistance from the international community in increase its capacity to track and to stop smugglers. End summary.

12. (c) Prior to briefing the Diplomatic Corps, the Committee met with ROYG officials, including Foreign Minister Qirbi, and the vice ministers of Interior, Defense and Transportation and representatives from "military intelligence" to discuss the expert report. Per the Committee, FM Qirbi promised cooperation on the Somalia arms embargo/arms smuggling issue, but expressed reservations about the report and Yemen's role in the problem, stressing the country's lack of capabilities, particularly for controlling its maritime borders. The ROYG is aware of the illegal export of arms, which Yemeni officials said need to be addressed by the international community and will be helped by the establishment of a fully functioning radar system to help track smugglers. According to a Committee representative, the Commander of the Yemeni Coast Guard (YCG) explained that the YCG is new and has only been developed over the last year.

13. (c) A Committee member identified the major issue for Yemen as the quantity of arms in the country, which the Committee was told would be addressed by licensing and increased efforts to stop arms from entering Yemen and increasing the capacity of the YCG to monitor its maritime borders. He added that on tracking the movement of boats, the ROYG said it is working on registering boats (see above-cited report, paragraph 90, regarding information on 4 vessels registered in Mukullah involved in Yemen-Somalia arms smuggling), including working with Yemeni fishermen in the south. The Committee said that overall the response from the ROYG was positive, but the conclusion was that there was a lot to be done and more information sharing is needed.

14. (c) The German Ambassador noted problems with the gun control legislation (it was tabled during last Parliamentary session, had to be re-introduced following the April 2003 elections, and shows no sign of movement toward passage) and agreed that both an overall reduction in arms and the registration of weapons are necessary. The Committee agreed that encouraging the ROYG to implement gun control legislation is important, but said it had not heard much about the substance of the draft law.

15. (c) British Ambassador criticized the Committee's contention that its existence and visit to Yemen would deter arms smuggling. She said that the 4-5 key arms dealers in Yemen are not likely to stop because an expert panel asks questions. A Committee member responded that the UNSC's attention, including expert panels and their reports, to this issue should help deter embargo violations. (Comment: The response was met with considerable skepticism by the audience. End comment)

16. (c) There were several general questions about how to help Yemen support the arms embargo against Somalia. The Committee noted that on-going dialogue, cooperation among countries in the region, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Arab League and African Union is

needed. It also emphasized the need for stability in the region and problems with gaining access to Somalia's territorial waters because there is currently no recognized government.

17. (c) After the briefing, the German expert told Pol/Econ Chief that when the Committee met with both Brigadier General Robeson and the Italian commander of the Red Sea fleet and it was told that the security/CT mandate of the fleet does not extend to interdiction of arms smuggling, which is largely done via smaller boats staying within territorial waters. It was informed that the fleet does not have the type of boats needed to conduct such close surveillance, and to expect a reduction in the number of ships available for patrols (see also report, paragraphs 86-87). The expert also noted that ROYG officials did not respond to requests for information about the weapons used in the November 2002 al-Qaida attacks in Mombassa (see report, box on pages 29-30, for more details on the source of the weapons used in the attacks).

18. (c) Comment: Unlike earlier reporting on official rejection of the use of Yemen's airports for smuggling (ref a), the ROYG does not deny that there is arms smuggling from Yemen to Somalia via sea routes. Standing up of the Yemeni Coast Guard, including the anticipated delivery of four reconditioned EDA patrol boats from the U.S. in January 2004, is an important step toward increasing Yemen's capacity to provide maritime security. The long-anticipated gun control law faces serious political opposition from tribal leaders who see it as an attempt to limit their influence and power. Even if such a law is passed, implementation in regions outside the capital is likely to be extremely difficult. End comment.

19. (U) MINIMIZE CONSIDERED
MISENHEIMER